

Greetings from Ossining, New York! (by Chris)

Since the end of September, we have been at Bethany House, the headquarters of Maryknoll Lay Missioners (MKLM), for trainings in preparation for our departure to Tanzania at the end of December 2011. Our last few months have been a time of challenges, joy, and growth. The orientation itself has been a series of trainings, workshops, and seminars covering a variety of topics, some spiritual (the theology of mission, scripture discussions, social analysis and Catholic Social Teaching) and some practical (Dialogue-Based Education, how to handle money in the midst of poverty, conflict resolution, how to deal with trauma).

I can say without qualification that the overall experience of our time so far with MKLM has been one of affirmation: neither Katie nor myself have any doubts that this organization is where we are supposed to be. As we continue to learn about the history and charism of the Maryknoll family- Maryknoll Lay Missioners as well as the Fathers, Brothers, Sisters- we are honored and humbled that this amazing organization has invited us to join its ranks and make our own contributions to its legacy of working with the global poor.



Chris and Katie with JoAnne Miya, Regional Coordinator for Tanzania and long-time MKLM missionary.

That Little Voice Inside Our Head (by Chris)

Over the last year, as we've been telling people that we were packing up and heading overseas to be Missioners, we've received tremendous support from friends and family. Yet, very often, one of the first reactions we would get is the question "Why? Why are you doing this?" The desire to go overseas is rooted in our faith: we were called, so we answered. But it's not quite that simple. As one of our orientation leaders mentioned, if we want to serve others and follow Christ's teachings, we can do that HERE in the US. There's something about the "intensity" of living overseas that is an appeal.



Katie leading a group activity during one of our Dialogue-Based Education training sessions.

I can wax poetic about all the motivations that factored into the decision to answer the call to mission, but I think the most honest answer is quite simple. "Why? Why are we doing this?" I don't know. We are called to SOMETHING, and that something is yet a mystery. In the face of such unknowns, I find myself embracing the words of Mother Mary Joseph, the founder of the Maryknoll Sisters: "Let's just go together and see what God has in store for us." Sounds like a plan!



Our Ministries, AKA, What We'll Be Doing

Due to the Tanzanian visa requirements, the five missionaries who will be sent to Tanzania this year have already been given our specific ministries. In October we met with JoAnne Miya, the Regional Coordinator for Tanzania, and mutually decided upon our placements.

Katie will be working at the Catholic Diocese of Mwanza in their Women's Programming Desk. She'll be assisting with gender-based programming such as:

Gender and HIV/AIDS, Gender and Inequality, Supporting Women in Civic Engagement, Support for Single Mothers and Women and Agriculture. She will be assisting a Tanzanian woman who, up until now, has been the sole coordinator of the programs. Katie is very excited, as this is the exact type of work that she wanted to do and her skills and education will certainly be utilized in this job.

Chris will be assisting with the Buswelu Women's Cooperative, wherein groups of 10 – 15 women work together around an income-generating project to earn money to better support their families. He will spend a lot of time in the more rural Buswelu community outside of Mwanza. Chris will serve as a resource for the women's groups, providing whatever support may be needed to develop the groups organically based on the needs and desires of the women involved.

Missioners at Home (by Katie)

Chris and I have been talking so much about "our mission" that we don't want to neglect the fact that there's another, more discreet mission that'll be happening concurrently with our individual missions in Tanzania. You, our family and friends, have your own missions in the US. Your mission is to support us! It would be utterly impossible for us to do what we are doing if it weren't for those closest to us.

We have such respect and awe for all of you. Unlike us, you have NOT chosen this journey. Chris and I made a decision that is impacting almost everyone we know in very real ways. And all of you have risen to the challenge of supporting us. We are eternally grateful for your prayers, visits, emails, donations, hugs, tears, free dinners, and other gestures and gifts. We are truly blessed to have you walking this journey with us.

Thank you for your support!
Chris and Katie Reid